

A Deconstruction of the Sri Lankan Government's Post-War Economic and Human Development Model and Its Ideology

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Introduction

The post-war Sri Lankan context marks a crucial phase in the political economic history of the country (Liyanage, 2011 and IPS, 2010). The comprehensive military defeat of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009, signified a fundamental change in the balance of political power in both North and South of Sri Lanka. This change, increased the political power through strengthening the parliamentary seats and the emotional support of the majority of the population. It has resulted in been able to accumulate a new breed of multidimensional legitimization to the war- triumphed Sri Lankan Government during the post- war period of 2009 – 2012.

The government has focused its attention on a major development exercise for the North including 'Northern Spring' (Uthuru Wasanthaya / Wadakkil Wasantham) based on the government's centralized planning, financing and supervising architecture reflecting the 'Mahinda Chinthana' (Thoughts of Mahinda) development programmes. The above development architecture has been targeted to address immediate and long-term economic and humanitarian needs of war affected civilians in the North with a collective approach. The basic research question of this study is whether Rajapaksha-regime development programmes could address the politico- economic and human development issues of the war affected civilians in Northern Sri Lanka.

Objectives

Thus, the objectives of this study are identify the goals of development programmes implemented by the government in Northern Sri Lanka; to identify what factors and forces motivated the government to implement

such development projects; to identify the impact of such development projects on the poverty situation in the north; and to examine the impact of post war development model on ethnic reconciliation, participatory development and redistribution of economic benefits.

Theoretical Background

Basically, the study uses two major theoretical tools for analysis. First one is the concept of “**Eight Broad Components of Poverty**” (Gunawardena, 2004) which can be used to scrutinize the poverty situation in a broader sense. The second theoretical tool is that ‘**Entitlement Approach**’. According to the Sen (1981), this approach focuses five fundamental ways to achieve entitlements in a context of war or post-war situation. Such are; Market Entitlement, Direct Entitlement, Public Entitlement, Civic Entitlement and Extra- legal Entitlement which are need to fulfill civilians’ material and non-material needs to alleviate poverty.

Methodology

This study integrates a methodology which develops a critical perception throughout the study to understand the situation of the study area and the civilians who live in the area. This way of developing a critical perception is called ‘Deconstruction of the development model and its’ ideology’. The poverty situations of war affected civilians were measured by using the above five entitlements of Sen’s (1981) entitlements approach. Both qualitative and quantitative data was used in this study. The sample consisted of 150 households from the war affected regions of Mannar, Mullaithivu and Killinochchi districts. The Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who are resettled within three months to one year since 2012, the IDPs who are resettled within one to two years and the civilians who are not IDPs are the three major categories in the sample.

Results and Discussion

The study identified that the expected goals of the post-war development model, are to resettle displaced people, generate of livelihood opportunities, to alleviate poverty, allocate resources to all communities. to achieve more balanced regional development. The government mechanism basically uses small-scale, medium-scale and mega-scale

development projects to achieve the above goals in the short-term and long-term.

In examination of what factors and forces motivated to implement current development practice in the North, number of evidences were found, but only four are considered as major evidences. They are; the emergence of massive scale of humanitarian needs after the war, identifying the economic potentialities of the northern region, highly centralized and extremely politicized development activities and legitimize government in the nationalistic politics against both nationally and internationally confronted pressure groups.

The ‘Entitlements Approach’ based evaluation reveals that government entitlement which mainly signifies public assistance which indicates a highly narrow contribution in non-material form to poverty situation of civilians. Government’s contribution is to some extent positively distributed in a few material components of poverty, like providing health and housing facilities. The civic entitlement is still not in a strong position because of limited freedom of effective involvement. Market entitlement that popularized in the region creates a situation to draw out the poverty status in the next round in much worsened patterns. Extra-legal entitlement approach can be considered as a key background factor to push this logic furthermore.

According to the government’s development manifesto the poverty situation of the North is purely an issue of underdevelopment. The study also remarks that the economic logic that has been planted in the North after war is extremely neo-liberal. Clearly, it does not help the poor to gain their economic abilities at all. But it redistributes the wealth of the poor to other classes of the economy. The political desires of the government are systematically embodied in situations like isolation, alienation, lack of decision making power and insecurity of the poor. Especially isolation, dependence, lack of decision making power, vulnerability to external shocks and insecurity came first in socio – political concerns of people live in war affected regions. The opportunistic policies leads to extremely negative consequences that could emerge in post-war fragility. It could hinder and delay the establishment of a lasting reconciliation process.

The study clearly indicates that there are extreme and asymmetrically distributed poverty situations in both material and non-material components of poverty in the North. The study also confirms the strong links between non-material poverty status and politico-economic

adjustments like constitutional power sharing, de-securitization and emancipation of ethnic identity. If these adjustments are not given considerable priority, as a nation we will not be able to think of improving participatory development, decentralization of benefits of economic growth and gain post-war reconciliation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the development mechanism introduced and implemented by the government will not be able to address the politico-economic and human development issues of the war affected civilians in the Northern Sri Lanka, if this very practice continues the same. If the government is reluctant to considerable relaxation on non-material poverty status and politico-economic adjustments like power sharing, desecuritization and emancipation of ethnic identity, we will not be able to think of improving participatory development, decentralization of benefits of economic growth and gain post-war reconciliation. Nevertheless this practice will also maintain the Tamil National Question as the 'question which requires new answers'.

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